

**Borough of Watchung  
Planning Board Meeting Minutes  
April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

Salute to the Flag.

Chairman Speeney called the meeting to order at 7:30 and stated that notice of this meeting had been posted in Borough Hall, filed with the Borough Clerk and given in the way of notice to the Courier News, Echoes Sentinel, and Star Ledger in conformance with the N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq.

Present at the call of the roll were: Speeney[X] Boyd[X] Havas[X] Haveson[X] Addario[A] Pennett[A] Schaefer[X] Beck-Clemens[X] Panzarella[X] Ellis[A] Pote[X] Also present was Board Attorney Frank Linnus and Board Engineer Tom Herits. Mayor Ellis arrived at 7:38

The Chair said that there were two sets of minutes published from March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Both the special meeting @ 7:00pm for the Long range plan of the Board of Education, and the Special meeting of 7:30. He asked for the waiving of the reading and a motion to approve the minutes of the 7:00 pm special meeting. Mr. Havas made a motion to approve the special meeting of 7:00pm seconded by Mr. Haveson. The Chair asked for a correction in the 7:00pm minutes to show that Mrs. Beck-Clemens was not present at the call of the roll. She arrived late, and Mr. Haveson was present. The Clerk noted the correction. There was no further discussion and the Chair asked for a voice vote to approve. All voted in favor of except Mrs. Beck-Clemens who was not eligible to vote. The minutes of the special meeting of 7:00pm were approved. The Chair asked for a motion to waive the reading of and approved the special meeting of 7:30. Mr. Haveson made that motion, seconded by Mr. Havas. The Chair asked for a correction in the roll call to include Mr. Haveson as present. The Clerk noted the change. Hearing no more discussion, the Chair asked for a voice vote. The board voted unanimously to approve. The minutes of the special meeting of 7:30 were approved.

Havas read: PBIR10-01 Crystal Ridge  
Informal hearing regarding the gates.

Lindsey Geitz came to the microphone and introduced herself working for Reverstone Residential who is the management company for the Crystal Ridge. Ms. Geitz said that she recognized that previously Black Rock Realty had sent both an attorney and also a representative to make an informal presentation to the Planning Board and she said that they had come unprepared. Ms. Geitz said

that there are all new people now and they are looking for a good solution for the problems with the gates. Ms. Geitz said none of her other properties that she manages have manned gates. Ms. Geitz said that it is not typical that there would be a manned gate at a community such as Crystal Ridge.

Ms. Geitz asked for a history from the board as to what had transpired. Mr. Havas said that he thought that the applicant had asked for the gate. Mr. Haveson said that it was a safety issue to have the gate. He said there is a level of crime in that area. He said that the thinking at the time was that it would offer a level of protection. Ms. Geitz said that her biggest point of contention with the gate is that it is perceived that it is a level of safety. Ms. Geitz said that they do not provide safety to the residents. The Chair said that David Weinberg who was the attorney for the applicant made an offering about security gates. The issue was then picked up by the residents in the area who were objecting to this development and when the gates were offered, it was in response to residents concerns. It was resolved that the front gate would be manned 24/7 and that the rear gate would be unmanned. The Chair said that Mr. Weinberg represented that this was an upscale development and both the board and Mr. Weinberg accepted this as conditions.

Ms. Geitz said that she took over in January of 2009, and has lost 15% per apartment. Ms. Geitz expressed concern that the gates created a false sense of security for the residents. She said that they are spending \$130,000.00 per year on the manning of the gate.

Councilman Pote asked if Ms. Geitz has considered the value of the gate as a deterrent. Mr. Haveson said that our police do not patrol there, because they view it as private property. Ms. Geitz said they don't offer security, they offer four walls and a door that locks. She said that they pay a hundred and thirty thousand dollars per year for the manning of the gate and often times the guard will be sleeping during his shift. The Chair said that she could make a formal application to the board. The Chair said that he much prefers the status quo and that he is not at all moved by the cost of the manning of the gate.

Ms. Geitz said she had two options. One was to get rid of the gate. Councilman Pote said that two years ago, when he tried to get through the gate, he was turned away. Mr. Haveson said that since that is private property, the security is the responsibility of the owner, not the town. Ms. Geitz asked if based on that, if they had the right to take down the gates altogether. The Chair said no, due to the fact that it was a condition of approval. She said that the residents sign that they are responsible for their own security. The Chair said that if they want, they can make a formal application and in doing so, they must notify the public and would have to deal with the issue of the public as well.

Ms. Geitz said she had a backup plan. It was electronic fob gates.

Ms. Geitz thanked the board for their time. The Chair suggested that they bring some evidence of residents of what they would like. Ms. Geitz said that they have surveyed their residents. The Chair said that if they submit a formal application, they would have to notice a 200-foot list to surrounding residents.

Mr. Linnus said that that we hope that the applicant would notice the residents of Crystal Ridge as well. The Chair said that there would be a request from this board about the tenants and where they stand on making the kind of change that the applicant suggests. Mr. Havas said that they should also consider having input from the police dept.

The Chair asked about the video that the board was to watch. Mrs. Taylor said that the CFO forgot to set up the equipment for the video, so the board would have to view it at the next meeting. The Chair said that the video would be played at the beginning of the next meeting.

Chairman Speeney brought up the ordinance of home office size that does not exceed 900 square feet. Chairman Speeney said that the Planning Board and the Laws and Ordinance committee have wrestled with this issue for quite a while. The Chair said that there was no limit to the size of the home office other than the limit of 25% of the total floor space. The Chair said that this proposed ordinance tightens up the limit to 900 square feet. The Chair said that this number was looked at by committees and the Maser Planner Marcia Shiffman. Mrs. Beck-Clemens asked if there would be a grandfather clause for existing offices. Mr. Linnus said that all pre-existing uses that exist at the time are grandfathered, however that could be challenged as well. After a discussion, the Chair said that he supports this maximum office space size, and asked if there was anyone against it. The Chair said there was a draft resolution written, and asked Mr. Havas to read this resolution PB10-R7 into the record.

(Recommendation to Borough Council of an amendment to the zoning ordinance of the Borough of Watchung Re: Professional Resident Home Offices) Hearing no further discussion, the Chair asked the Clerk to call the roll. The roll call vote was as follows:

Speeney[yes] Boyd[yes] Havas[yes] Haveson[yes] Schaefer[yes]  
Beck-Clemens[yes] Panzarella[yes] Ellis[yes] Pote[yes] The motion carried.

The Chair asked the Planning Board ordinance committee to have the issue of house size referred to them for discussion.

The Chair brought up the Somerset County Circulation plan for discussion by the board and he asked for some feedback from board members or input for the survey he had to fill out. The Chair said that the County is updating the Circulation Plan and they would like each and every Planning Board's input and opened this topic up for discussion. Mrs. Beck-Clemens said that cities around the world have been rezoning according to population density, rather than land use. Mrs. Beck-Clemens said that when people exit the Blue Star shopping center by Fridays is a very dangerous turn. The Chair said that the current work being done on that road should alleviate the danger there. Mrs. Schaefer brought up the need for a light at Washington Rock. The Chair also thought that

a turning lane was needed at Brookdale and Mountain Blvd. as well as Anderson and Mountain Blvd. The Chair brought up the topic of sidewalks on the north side of Mountain Blvd., in order to move people from the Lake to the Ness property. Engineer Tom Herits said that the county wanted the Borough to pay for the sidewalks, and the Borough is not in a position to do that at this time.

Chairman Speeney opened the meeting to the public. Hearing no discussion, closed the public portion.

Chairman Speeney adjourned the meeting until the next meeting of May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carolyn Taylor  
Planning Board Clerk